

## [Johns]

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Following a suggestion from Mr. Titus, the village auto repair-man I call at the home of a Mr. Johns, who lives directly opposite the old Knife Company plant, now used as headquarters by a branch of the state forestry department. But Mr. Johns, has never worked at the factory, says he knows little of Northfield history.

"I haven't lived here all my life, you see," he explains. "Yes, I was here when the factory was running, but I didn't work in the knife shop. Of course I'm more or less interested in Northfield history. Guess everyone who lives in the village is to a certain extent. There's an old scrapbook around here, if I can find it." Mr. Johns excuses himself and is gone for a considerable time, but eventually returns bearing the scrapbook. It contains the newspaper articles of James P. Catlin, previously transcribed, and a few other items.

"You'll find something there about old Parson Camp," says Mr. Johns, "and to my mind he was one of the most interestin' people in the history of the village. I've heard a good many stories about him. Can't tell you whether there's any truth is some of em or not, but he must have been a very unusual man to stir up so much talk.

"They called him 'Priest' Camp. Church kinda split up for a while when he was minister, and a lot of them went over to other congregations, I don't know why they called him 'Priest.' Maybe they thought he had a leanin' towards the Catholic faith. of course the clippings in that scrap book don't tell all the story. You can figure it out for yourself the hot arguments they had over religion in this little town in those days. Religion and temperance was all they had to fight about.

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"And politics, I suppose likely. But religion came first. It tells here about them breakin' away from the church."

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The clipping in the scrapbook states primly: "Several people became displeased with the church over which Rev. Joseph Camp was pastor, and formed the sect known as the Universalists, or Separatists. The tavern where George Guernsey's house now is (date uncertain) was used for their meeting place. The history of this little band has never been written and the only means of tracing it is by means of word of mouth, or tradition. It is known that they met as late as 1840, and probably began about 1810.

"'Priest' Camp took occasion to denounce the sect from his pulpit and this did not improve matters any. When Mr. Camp died in 1837, the reason for the band ceased, and in a few years it had entirely disappeared."

Another clipping discloses that Mr. Camp sought to resign in 1810, rather than remain in his pastorate and create a schism, but that a number of influential parishioners prevailed upon him to reconsider. The item throws no light whatsoever on the cause of the trouble, but states unequivocally that the pastor's death in 1837 was "hastened" by it.

Says Mr. Johns: "They say he was kind of careless and eccentric. I don't mean there was anything bad about him, but he just wasn't up to what they thought a minister ought to be. Look at this clipping here."

The clipping: "A story is told of the time 'Priest' Camp went on a sleigh ride to Waterbury one winter evening with a party of young people. They had supper in the city and upon their return stopped at the tavern where George Guernsey's house now stands. There was dancing upstairs, and 'Priest' went up 'to hear the fiddle.'

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On another occasion Mr. Camp wanted to bush a piece of ground for planting. He went to a number of neighbors to borrow cattle, but found none idle. He returned home and hitched his boys to the bush and proceeded with the bushing."

Mr. Johns chuckles. "You see a minister doin' those kind of things in those 3 days was apt to get himself talked about. That's about all there is there on Mr. Camp. I doubt if you could find much more about the big fight, no matter where you looked. There were some great characters in Northfield. Old Dan T. Wooster was another one they used to tell about. He owned a store. He couldn't argue over prices, it wasn't in him. They tell about the time somebody was tryin' to beat him down, and the party says to him, 'mr. Wooster, don't you s'pose you could come down a bit?' Wooster says, 'Yes, I s'pose I could, but I be damned if I will!'

"There ain't anything here about the Pecks, that I remember. Oh, I knew them, yes, knew them both. Here's a little something about another peddler, though[.?]"

The item: "To mention all the peddlers who have solicited trade in Northfield during the past would be out of the question, but not to mention one of whom Northfield hardly thinks as a peddler would be impossible. Elias B. Bennett has furnished sea food in all its forms for so long that he has become a dealer and Northfield would not know where else to look for these particular edibles."

Mr. Johns: "Have you seen Mr. Humiston about the church history? They say that's mighty interestin'. They had a Baptist church here at one time, and a Methodist, and for a little while later on they had an Advent Christian church. They say there was even Quakers here before 1800. That's a lot of churches for a little bit of a village.

"And famous people. Northfield even had a few famous people. Governor Henry Dutton was a Northfield man. They had clergymen, lawyers, businessmen and even an inventor or two, I believe, you'll find 'em all in Northfield history, you go diggin, after it. Even a post.

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Alice M. Rogers. They got her book right up here in the library. Why don't you go see Mr. Humiston? He's the one can tell you Northfield history.”